

## Submission

Mr Chairman ladies and gentlemen thank you for the opportunity to speak to you.

I commenced employment at Concord Hospital in March 1993 and have been in full time employment for 30 years, giving continuous and loyal service to Concord and the SLHD. During that time, I have diligently and conscientiously served as a registered nurse, Clinical Nurse Consultant for Critical Care and Patient Representative, which is my current substantive position. I was also very involved in Nursing Education. I have a BA (Rand) and Diplomas of Education from the Johannesburg College of Education and the NSW Education Department. I graduated with a BA (Nursing) from UTS and attained a Masters in Critical Care (Sydney University) for which I won the University Medal. I have a Diploma of Management and am also an accredited Crisis Support worker with Lifeline.

I have loved working at Concord and have always gone the extra mile taking on additional duties such as double shifts, foregoing annual holidays or working on Christmas Day if requested. Concord has always been a friendly supportive place in which to work. I have always had an amicable, respectful, and collaborative working relationship with all staff. In my role as Patient Representative, I have also maintained a productive advocacy relationship with patients and their families. I have successfully balanced advocating for patients and families with supporting medical, nursing, and allied health staff and protecting the hospital.

I know that I was respected and liked by staff and always felt valued and appreciated. Patient care was foremost at CRGH and I was proud of my work and my contribution to the hospital. I was proud to be associated with CRGH and the SLHD. I have always imagined that I would happily end my career at Concord.

Everything changed in 2018 when I was subjected to bullying and harassment. I had been in the role of Patient Representative for approximately 10 years and was located in the Executive Unit. Since I am subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the Code of Conduct, I cannot provide you with specific details of the bullying and harassment but suffice to say I was subject to constant negative criticism about, and scrutiny of my performance, exclusion, role reduction, and conflicting instructions, all occurring in an unsupportive negative critical environment.

In March/April 2018, I was immediately suspended from my position and advised that I was subject to confidentiality and the Code of Conduct and could not talk to anyone.

I was already distressed and insecure because of the bullying and harassment to which I was being subjected. I was moved out of the Executive suite to a dirty dingy office and a memo was sent that day to the hospital, advising the hospital that I was being replaced by an Intern. This, further added to my humiliation and distress. I had no right of reply and became subject to innuendo, speculation and gossip throughout the hospital.

I was ultimately exonerated from the issues which led to my suspension and told to report back to the Executive and resume my role as Patient Representative. It was a pyrrhic victory. I returned to work a broken and diminished person. Even though exonerated, I felt that maybe I had done something wrong, maybe I was not good at the job, my confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth had been shattered by the experience. I developed anxiety requiring medication, hypertension also needing treatment and I felt ashamed and lived in fear of further false allegations. I feared going to work, feared seeing the GM and my Line Manager because I feared their negative criticism and possible further false allegations against me. I was second guessing myself all the time.

I had been cautioned by someone familiar with the workings of the Executive and SLHD that if I returned, I would be scrutinised and everything I did would be watched. Unfortunately, this occurred. I continued to be bullied and harassed. This time the perpetrators focused on my performance alleging that I did not know how to write responses to the HCCC, Minister and complainants. I was aware that no matter what I did it would never be right. To test this I completed a Ministerial, and asked one of the staff in the district, where all Ministerials are checked before going to the Minister, if she would look at the Ministerial I had prepared before I gave it to the GM. It was returned to me with a few minor changes. I submitted it to one of the people responsible for the bullying and was faced with red pen corrections all over the work and told that the work was not satisfactory. When I told the person that I had had it checked and approved by the district they were angry. I and the district staff were forbidden to do that again. I knew then that nothing I did would-be acceptable, and fault would always be found with my work.

The bullying and harassment continued unabated. I became afraid to go to work, anxious, unable to sleep, haunted by what might go wrong, what I might do that was incorrect. Systematically they eroded my confidence, my persona, and my health. I now suffer from anxiety, palpitations and have gone into AF. I am reclusive and only feel safe in my home. I wake up at night and think about what has occurred, I feel ashamed and humiliated, and am a diminished shell of my former self.

Because I do not have the mindset to systematically bully and destroy a person and because I think all decent human beings are the same, I am vulnerable and an easy target for bullies; I do not expect people to behave in a destructive way and am unable to understand the behaviour of the Exec and SLHD. I need to understand why I was targeted and destroyed. I need resolution as I no longer have the resilience to withstand the attacks. I am currently on long service leave.